



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

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ECUADORIAN NATIONAL PLEADS GUILTY IN ALIEN SMUGGLING CASE

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that 58-year-old Carlos Cuesta-Rodriguez of Guayaquil, Ecuador, pled guilty to conspiracy to smuggle, transport and harbor illegal aliens resulting in death.

Appearing before United States Magistrate Judge Andrew Austin yesterday, Cuesta-Rodriguez admitted that for approximately the past ten years, he organized the smuggling of thousands of illegal aliens into the United States from Ecuador as well as other Central and South American countries in exchange for smuggling fees between \$5,500 and \$9,000 per illegal alien. During one of the organization's alien smuggling operations, two undocumented aliens died. On July 23, 1996, Hays County Sheriff's Office deputies discovered the bodies of two men—a Mexican National and an Ecuadorian National—in a field behind a truck stop in Buda, Texas. Autopsies revealed the two died as a result of heat stroke suffered while being transported in an unventilated cargo trailer used to transport approximately 40 undocumented aliens to Austin.

On December 16, 2003, Cuesta-Rodriguez and four others were indicted by a federal grand jury in Austin. The other four defendants—51-year-old Juan Carlos Pena-Gutierrez of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, 47-year-old Carlos Javier Pena-Gutierrez of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, 64-year-old Alfonso Rodriguez-Catalan living in Laredo, Texas and 34-year-old Juan Carlos Calles living in Dallas, Texas—remain fugitives.

Cuesta-Rodriguez, who faces up to life in federal prison, remains in federal custody pending sentencing. Sentencing has not been scheduled.

This ongoing investigation is being conducted by agents from the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Gerald C. Carruth.

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